

REFORMATION NOTES

News for Partners of the Richard C. Kessler Reformation Collection

Spring 2006, Number 28

Kessler Collection Update

M. Patrick Graham

The Richard C. Kessler Reformation Collection is a repository of rare and valuable documents produced in connection with the Protestant Reformation. The collection now contains more than 3,100 pieces written by Martin Luther, his colleagues, and opponents, and printed during their lifetimes.

Supported by the vision and resources of Lutheran laypeople Richard and Martha Kessler and partners throughout the Southeast, the collection is housed in the Pitts Theology Library of Candler School of Theology. It provides a rich resource for scholars of the Reformation and for clergy and laity who seek to understand the history of the Christian faith.

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The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century was the pivotal religious movement in Western culture since the introduction of Christianity, and the purpose of the Richard C. Kessler Reformation Collection has been to document that reformation in Germany. The collection has set out to gather materials that would give historians and theologians the opportunity to hear the full range of voices that were raised in this dynamic period. As the Kessler Collection enters its nineteenth year, we pause to take stock of its accomplishments and call attention to what lies on the horizon.

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The Kessler Collection of Pitts Theology Library at Emory University is the best single source of early Protestant Reformation imprints in North America. . . . The collection is a treasure for all of us at Emory University and for all of us who labor in Reformation and early modern history.

—John Witte Jr.

Jonas Robitscher Professor of Law, Emory



FROM VOLUME ONE (1551 PRINTING) OF THE WITTENBERG EDITION OF LUTHER'S COLLECTED WORKS.

EMORY

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The Kessler Collection has assembled, in a relatively short time, an amazing treasure of Reformation tracts and literature and has made these available to all through its unsurpassed digitization of Reformation woodcuts and its annual program of music, lectures, and publications.

—Timothy J. Wengert, Ministerium of Pennsylvania Professor, Reformation History, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia

Kessler Collection Update—

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COLLECTIONS

The holdings of the collection now exceeds 3,100 items, a mark approximated by only two other libraries in North America (Harvard University and the Folger Shakespeare Library); no American library approaches the Kessler Collection's 900+ publications by Luther himself. It is typically the case that about half of the materials acquired each year are not held by any other North American library; and in another quarter of the cases, only one other library has a copy. In a few instances, the Kessler Collection copy is the only one known to exist. These materials are currently valued in excess of \$4,000,000. Details about the strengths of the collection have been gathered by Armin Siedlecki in his article on page three. The collection has been growing by more than fifty pieces each year, and it should not be long until the thousandth publication by Martin Luther is acquired.

RESEARCH

Most of those who use the Kessler Collection come from local educational institutions—Emory, Atlanta University, Columbia Theological Seminary, Georgia State University, and others. It is increasingly the case, though, that researchers come from outside Atlanta. Indeed, the recent meeting of the Sixteenth Century Society Conference in Atlanta brought the collection to the attention of many additional Reformation scholars. The Kessler Collection also has stimulated the publication of a four-volume bibliography that examines in detail the first 1,400 items in the collection, a photographic reproduction of the Magdeburg Enchiridion of 1536 with notes, a collection of essays on Melancthon and the commentary, and several pamphlets on Reformation topics.



FROM *HORTULUS ANIMAE*,
WITTENBERG, 1550.

EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

The Kessler Collection has sponsored eighteen concert and lecture programs that have brought internationally renowned scholars and musicians to the Emory campus to explore historical aspects of the German Reformation and attest its ongoing influence on the contemporary world. This program has matured into the annual Reformation Day at Emory series, which attracted more than six hundred to the 2005 concert. In addition, each year library staff make presentations of Kessler Collection materials to a dozen or more groups—numbering three hundred to four hundred persons in all—that come from civic groups, churches, colleges and seminaries, and even elementary schools. In addition, the collection has produced and distributed gratis thousands of bookmarks, note cards, and posters during this time.


DIGITAL RESOURCES

Finally, the collection provided the initial impulse for the creation of the Digital Image Archive (DIA), a resource of about 13,000 woodcuts and engravings, made available at no charge for teaching and research via the Pitts Theology Library homepage (click on the

Luther Rose at www.pitts.emory.edu). Grants from the American Theological Library Association (\$18,000), the Carpenter Foundation (\$63,000), Thrivent Financial for Lutherans Foundation (\$25,000), and several individuals have underwritten the costs of this program. At last count, an average of almost five hundred visitors logged onto the DIA each day, and a search of the Internet turned up about 4,000 links to the archive. In addition to many individuals, churches, and other organizations using the images for non-commercial purposes, the following publishers have purchased images for their publications: Abingdon Press, Ashgate Publishing, Augsburg Fortress Press, Cambridge University Press, Concordia Publishing House, Georgetown University Press, *Lectionary Homiletics*, Palgrave Macmillan, and Paternoster Press.

FACILITIES

The Candler School of Theology has planned to begin construction on a new facility for the Pitts Theology Library in 2008. This structure will support the Kessler Collection and the rest of special collections in several important ways.

- ♦ It will provide secure, high-density shelving with a dry-agent, fire protection system for all special collections materials.
- ♦ There will be a separate special collections reading room for researchers, as well as assignable research carrels for longer-term projects.
- ♦ A separate exhibit room with state-of-the-art display cases and an adjacent lecture hall will accommodate larger exhibits and more visitors than the current facility supports.
- ♦ A scanning lab will be part of the library's technology operation; it will permit a sustained effort to make the riches of the Kessler Collection available to the world. 

M. Patrick Graham is Librarian and Margaret A. Pitts Professor of Theological Bibliography.

Reform and the Press

Armin Siedlecki

The cultural impact of the invention and spread of the Internet in the late twentieth century has been compared to that of the invention of the printing press in the fifteenth century. It is undoubtedly true that the Reformation, as it unfolded across Europe in the sixteenth century, would have been unthinkable without the new technology. Yet, despite the obvious advantages, Luther himself—as well as many of his fellow reformers—was often critical of this then-relatively recent invention, claiming that it led to the proliferation of useless and sometimes harmful books. However, the rapid spread of printed material also led to an enormous expansion in educational possibilities. According to scholar R. A. Houston, “The duchy of Württemberg had 89 schools in 1520 compared with more than 400 by 1600.”¹ At the beginning of the sixteenth century, fifty years after Gutenberg, a fairly dense network of presses had spread throughout much of Western Europe, with printing houses in about sixty German cities. The beginning of the Reformation in 1517 also coincides with a virtual explosion of printing. Much of this increase is represented by the publication of pamphlets, or *Flugschriften*, through which many reformers and their opponents carried out public debates in often sharply formulated attacks. Shorter works like such pamphlets or sermons also were frequently reprinted by different printers in different cities, sometimes numerous times within the same year.

Reformation Figures

Martin Luther initiated the German Reformation in 1517 with the publication of ninety-five theses about errors

in the Church and was the most prolific author in the sixteenth century. Other influential figures in the Reformation movement were Melancthon, Bugenhagen, Brenz, Flacius Illyricus, and Karlstadt, although there was often a good deal of debate among these theologians as to what shape the reformation should take.

Opponents of Luther

Erasmus of Rotterdam was the leading humanist theologian of the sixteenth century, and though he was initially sympathetic to Luther’s cause, he came to oppose the reformer later in debates

Kessler Holdings of Eight Catholic Authors

Desiderius Erasmus	74
Johannes Cochlaeus	39
Johann Eck	44
Georg Witzel	30
Pope Leo X	22
Hieronymus Emser	16
Thomas Murner	3
Johann Tetzel	1

about the freedom of the human will and the idea of justification. Johann Eck was one of Luther’s fiercer opponents, debating Luther at a public disputation—initiated by Karlstadt in 1518 at Leipzig—and encouraging Pope Leo X to excommunicate Luther in 1520. Johann Cochlaeus participated in the Diet of Worms in 1521 and later composed a strongly polemical biography of Luther. Pope Leo X, the first of the Medici popes, assumed his office in 1513. He warned Luther in a 1520 bull to withdraw forty-one of the reformer’s ninety-five theses or face excommunication. Luther publicly burnt his copy of the bull along with several books on canon law, and Leo made good on his threat. ^{RS}

¹R. A. Houston, “Literacy,” *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) 429.

Kessler Holdings of Fifteen Major Reformers

Martin Luther	934	Johannes Brenz	21
Philipp Melancthon	189	Andreas Osiander	18
Matthias Flacius Illyricus	49	Veit Dietrich	17
Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt	46	Wenzeslaus Linck	13
Johann Bugenhagen	33	Jakob Andreae	12
Urbanus Rhegius	30	Hans Sachs	9
Georg Major	28	Justus Jonas	6
		Kaspar Cruciger	5



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“Reformation ‘places’ for observation and study used to be Wittenberg and Geneva, Cambridge and Rome, New Haven and St. Louis—but not Atlanta. Now Atlanta is very much ‘on the map,’ a place of pilgrimage for scholars, lovers of the art and music of the Reformation, admirers of historic books, thanks to the Kessler Collection.”—Martin E. Marty, Fairfax M. Cone Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus, The University of Chicago

Save the Date

“Luther and the Poor”

Nineteenth-Annual Reformation Day at Emory

October 24, 2006

- 10:30 a.m.** Registration and reception
- 11:00 a.m.** Chapel, Robert M. Franklin Jr., preacher
- Noon** Luncheon and lecture, James Curran, dean of the Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University
- 1:45 p.m.** Organ lecture recital, Timothy Albrecht
- 2:30 p.m.** Hosted break
- 3:00 p.m.** Lecture and discussion, Carter Lindberg
- 8:00 p.m.** Kessler Reformation Concert, with Timothy Albrecht, Eric Nelson, Emory Concert Choir, and the New Trinity Baroque Orchestra

All events are offered free of charge.

Key Holdings of the Kessler Collection

- *The September Testament* (1522): The first edition of Luther’s German translation of the New Testament
- The first and second editions of Erasmus’s Greek New Testament
- 1520 printings of Luther’s three landmark pamphlets (*The Address to the German Nobility*, *The Babylonian Captivity*, and *The Freedom of the Christian Man*)
- The first edition of Luther’s *Large Catechism* (1529) and a 1545 printing of his *Small Catechism*
- The first official German and Latin editions of the *Augsburg Confession* (1530), the chief dogmatic statement of the Lutheran movement, and Melanchthon’s 1540 revision of this document (the “Variata”)
- The first printing of the first edition of Melanchthon’s *Loci Communes* (1521), the first Protestant systematic theology
- Two Latin and one German printings of *Exsurge Domine* (1520), the papal bull threatening Luther with excommunication
- The first edition of the *Canons and Decrees* (1564) of the Council of Trent—the Catholic Church’s response to the Protestants
- Twelve Lutheran church orders from various parts of Germany
- Seven early Lutheran hymnals, including the *Achtliederbuch* of 1524, the first Lutheran hymnal

